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Becoming Teachers of the Language of Content

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Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL) Residency 2017 Project Summary

Authors

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Project Title

Becoming Teachers of the Language of Content

Project Description

How do pre-service teachers focused on a particular content area (e.g. mathematics) evolve over the ELL endorsement program to also become teachers of the language of their content area?

Content area pre-service teachers (PSTs) often see themselves as “teachers of math” or “teachers of science” rather than teachers of both the concepts and the language of that content area. PSTs need to understand how to best support ELLs (English language learners) and ALLs (academic language learners) in the language of the content areas in order for those students to be successful in understanding the concepts and in demonstrating that knowledge in appropriate ways. I think we have started in the right direction in our program, but I am not sure how much PSTs are really taking away in terms of Knowledge of Language (KOL) and how they are applying it to their teaching. We assess this in individual assignments, but we don’t really track the growth/change over time.

This is an important project since we are working on redesigning our program. The data from this study will help to inform changes.

Project Design

Pilot

Winter-Spring 2018—Design and administer some surveys and some questions in various ELL Endorsement classes.

Summer 2018—I will analyze the data to help make final changes in our program changes that will be implemented in Fall 2018.

Full study

Fall 2018-Spring 2019 (2-years)—Follow students as they progress through the series of ELL courses and monitor their growth over time. The assessments/evidence gathered will be informed by the pilot study, but I have listed some possibilities.

The pieces of evidence will be part of the curriculum—so students will need to complete them as part of their course of study and reflection. However, PSTs will be able to check at each point

(permission/no permission) to use the data point in our study. I still need to think through the IRB/consent forms for a study of this length. I also need to really figure out how/when/why I am collecting the data points listed above. This study is in its early phase, so it will likely evolve.

Next Steps

Some of the data collected will be used to inform the program changes we are making to make the ELL endorsement more desirable and possible for PSTs, especially those in Secondary Education. There are many publishing venues I will consider that focus on SoTL. I am not sure which ones will be most appropriate. I will also submit my findings to the AERA and TESOL conferences.